OUR NEW·ENGLAND·

Copy 1.

OUR NEW ENGLAND

A NEW ENGLAND HOME.

THE supper o'er, with books, or converse sweet,
Or lightsome tasks, the happy hours they spend;
Perhaps some tale of olden time repeat,
Or welcome give to neighbor and to friend.

JONES VERY.

FROM "THE HOME."

OUR NEW ENGLAND

HER NATURE DESCRIBED BY HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE
AND SOME OF HER FAMILIAR SCENES
ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON
ROBERTS BROTHERS
1890

Copyright, 1890,
By Roberts Brothers.

University Press:
John Wilson and Son, Cambridge.

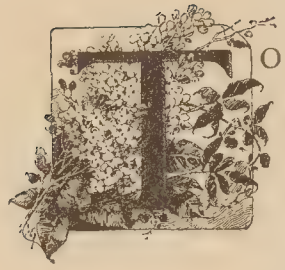
TRANSFERRED FROM THE
DEPARTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

Photogravures (Gravure-Gilbo) from Nature by A. W. Elson & Co., Boston.
The Remarks drawn by Frank T. Merrill.

A New England Home . . . . . *Frontispiece*
Home of the Puritan . . . . . *To face page* 2
A Family of Rocks 4
Happy Hollow 6
Country Road in Winter 8
On the Exeter River 10
Past Milking Time. "Why don't you come and get us" 12
Country Road in Summer 14
Milking Time 16
Eastern Point Beach, Gloucester Harbor 18
A Warm Corner 20
Through the Pines 22

NATURE IN NEW ENGLAND.



O know Nature in New England one must have watched the seasons in boyhood or youth, when one is still in the poetic mood, before the evil days come when one ceases to *feel* and strives only to *see*. It is early and old acquaintance with Nature that counts. The belated, formal relations which mature people sometimes form with the shy and wilful spirit of the fields and woods never approach intimacy. This somewhat conventional intercourse is well enough in its way; but it is a very different thing from the "freedom of the house," the privilege of coming and going at one's pleasure, of silence or speech according to one's mood. In New England I have always fancied that intimacy of relation was more difficult to establish than elsewhere; there is a touch of the recluse about Nature in New England which adds piquancy and charm to friendship when it is finally established. In the tropics the mood is languorous, sensuous, oppressive; in New England it is a trifle reserved, but frank, genuine, and in the end genial and open. But to penetrate this reserve and reach the mellow spirit of the landscape one must wander through

the woods with the eager heart of a boy, or dream the dream of youth along the banks of the quiet brooks.

It is a great piece of good fortune to be born in New England; but if this particular gift of the beneficent fairy who presides over the cradle is denied, the next best thing is to spend some of the long years of boyhood there, — those years so finely receptive of natural sights and sounds. Failing in this, the last chance comes with the opportunity of college life in a New England town, — an opportunity which means, to the imaginative youth, a romance of the soul, full of the charm of a relationship never perfectly defined, and always hinting at some finer intimacy still in reserve. Actæon was a young man when he happened upon Diana, and Pheidippides a young man when in his swift journey from Athens to Sparta he saw of a sudden the great god Pan; and I suspect that youth has still the privileges which it held in the days of the elder gods. Unless we stray upon Nature when mind and heart are still one faculty, we are likely ever after to pursue her with baffled feet.

The reserve of Nature in New England has often been misunderstood; it is the reserve of a chaste, finely tempered and heroic spirit, not of coldness, restraint, and hauteur. First impressions linger long after fuller knowledge has shown them to be mere illusions; and the first impressions of New England were distinctly unfavorable. If the colonists of 1620 had landed in Plymouth Bay in June instead of December, the report that went abroad of New England would have conveyed a genial and mellow instead of a harsh and bleak

THE HOME OF THE PURITAN.

How pleasant! This old house looks down
Upon a shady little town,
Whose great good luck has been to stay
Just outside of the modern way
  Of tiresome strut and show;
The elm trees overhead have seen
Two hundred new-born summers green
Up to their tops for sunshine climb;
And since the old colonial time
  The road has wound just so.

LUCY LARCOM.

FROM "A GAMBREL ROOF."

import. The melancholy monotone of the waves breaking on "a stern and rock-bound coast" would not have lingered in the ear as the dominant note of the New England landscape; nor would short and bitter days and snow-beleagured forests have furnished the atmosphere and background of New England scenery as often conceived by persons at a distance. That December landing was not without obvious advantages in the way of discipline, but it gave occasion for a misapprehension which still exists in many minds. The year in New England has four well-defined seasons, and winter is one, not all, of them.

It is another misfortune of New England that its spring has fallen into the hands of the humorists instead of the poets, and that to certain undeniably unpleasant features have been added the exaggerations of humor and the unscrupulous misrepresentations of wit. From the times of the earliest colonists to these days of Mark Twain and Mr. Warner, New England has suffered from a form of injustice none the less grievous because it has been both entertaining and popular. History and humor have lent themselves, unwillingly perhaps but not the less effectively, to a conspiracy which has had for its end a perversion of the facts about out-of-door New England. That conspiracy has only succeeded, however, in diffusing a vague impression of an unpleasant character, — an impression which has become more and more vague of late, and is fast dissolving into thin air.

New England has been fortunate in her poets, who are always and everywhere the authoritative interpreters of Nature; and for two generations that vast and varied music to

which New England life is set, — the music of the sea singing along the shore, of the wind through the forests, of the brooks in the meadows, — has been in the ear of the world. Bryant, Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Miss Larcom, Mrs. Thaxter, and kindred spirits have kept the record of the New England year, not with the hard accuracy of science, but with the tender suggestiveness of poetry, — that magical registry of the imagination which not only preserves the fact, but makes it live again. There have been also the close and patient observers, who listened intently in the woods and walked with hushed steps across the meadows, eager to surprise Nature in some unguarded moment, and to win some new and permanent addition to human knowledge. In the keen, stimulating New England atmosphere so reposeful a mind as that of Gilbert White would have betrayed not a greater love of the things of Nature, but a more aggressive curiosity. The air of Selborne contained less oxygen than the air of Concord.

Thoreau brought the acuteness and eager interest of the Yankee mind to the observation of natural phenomena. His philosophy, heroic in its discipline and detached and solitary in its mood, is characterized not by breadth and range, but by a certain keen individualism; it is always homely in the old sense of the word; even when it glances at the solar spaces, it is never far from the familiar landmarks of daily life. Since men began to be curious about the things which surround them, Nature has probably never had a more pertinacious and tireless student of her moods and manners. No obstacles daunted him, no failures discouraged him, no mysteries baffled him. He was as inexorable as fate in the continuance and

A FAMILY OF ROCKS.

. . . . . In foam and spray
Wave after wave
Breaks on the rocks which, stern and gray,
Shoulder the broken tide away.

WHITTIER.

FROM "HAMPTON BEACH."

thoroughness of his scrutiny; if he had lived long enough he would have pierced all the disguises and penetrated all the artifices of Nature, and discovered her secret. For the contest that went on between them he was singularly well equipped. His human interests were few, his human relationships of the most elementary kind; while his interest in the non-human world was intense, and his absorption in it complete. It was matter of indifference to him what he saw, so long as he had the consciousness of seeing; the swamp was as interesting to him as the forest, and the crow as significant as the bird of Paradise. Cold and heat, sunlight and storm, winter and summer, were alike to him. It was never a question of comfort, always a question of observation. He had the physical insensibility of a Spartan, the endurance of a Cossack, the keenness of sense of an Indian. His only disadvantage lay in his mortality; his death alone saved Nature from final and complete discovery. Thoreau kept the record of the New England year as Nature herself would have kept it had she taken the matter in hand,—kept it with sleepless vigilance and tireless accuracy. No stealthy motion at dusk, no mysterious transaction at midnight, no furtive proceeding in the early dawn escaped him; there was no happening in the course of the day which he failed to perceive. He was always awake and always within hearing. Such crude instruments as pencil and note-book were beneath that supreme art of seeing which he possessed,—the art of being so much a part of things that what happened to them happened to him.

In this identification of his life with the life of Nature, Thoreau was by no means so idiosyncratic as he has sometimes been represented. In this as in some other things he was

distinctly representative of the New England habit and attitude of mind. It is true that Nature is out-of-doors in New England as elsewhere; but the idea of home implicit in the phrase "out-of-doors" is so generous and inclusive that it takes in the whole landscape. The old homestead was not a thing of beams and rafters only; its invisible limits were coincident with the boundaries of the farm. In the mind of the boy who was fortunate enough to make his bow of introduction under its roof, the house was never dissociated from the farm; and when in later years the miracle of childhood and youth became a memory, the old home was so blended with sunny fields and running brooks and sheltering woods that they were all parts of one impression. The boy lived on the entire farm,—there was no corner of it to which he was a stranger; there were many nooks in it which were a part of himself. He knew the path across the meadow so well that his feet, often bare in summer, took instant notice of any change in its well-worn surface,—eyes and ears meanwhile reporting the landscape at large. He knew the clumps of chestnut-trees, the pools in the brook, the cleared spaces in the woods, not as one knows things when as a man he takes conscious account of them, but when as a boy he is born one of them and never in thought dissociates himself from them. The old house, simple in outline, substantial in structure, so delightfully unconscious of the subtleties of color that it combined white and green with uncompromising sincerity, was the centre of associations that made the entire landscape a personal possession. Under its roof life was more evidently centred, more definitely expressed, more susceptible to persons and emotions, than without; but at the end of the day, when

HAPPY HOLLOW.

THEN we will laugh at Winter when we hear
  The grim old churl about our dwellings rave;
Thou from that "ruler of the inverted year"
  Shalt pluck the knotty sceptre Cowper gave,
And pull him from his sledge, and drag him in,
And melt the icicles from off his chin.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

FROM "A MEDITATION ON RHODE ISLAND COAL."

its activities were summed up, it would be difficult to decide whether the balance lay inside or outside the walls.

When Titian had attained splendid mastery of his art at Venice, the memory of the hills about Cadore, where his boyhood had received its first intense impressions, haunted his pictures; in those recurring backgrounds the artist's youth kept silent companionship with his prime. A boy often seems heedless of his world; one might fancy that he did not see it, so intent is he on personal gains and pleasures. But the most delicate and sensitive registry is often the most unobtrusive, and a boy's mind is most keenly observant when apparently most indifferent. The swift walker along the lonely road at evening, whose boisterous whistle obtrudes the discords of the day on the silence of the evening, misses no sight or sound that has any element of mystery in it. Years after there flashes into memory some turn of that solitary road, where the trees were massed in dense shadow and the great stars burned with remote and tremulous splendor over them. Unconsciously the whole moving landscape sank into the boy's soul, hurrying homeward not without those vague fears that beset the healthy barbarism of childhood.

The ploughman who still turns the yielding soil in Homer's description of the shield of Achilles receives his portion of "honey-sweet wine" at the end of every furrow; but the boy behind the plough on the uplands of New England is paid as he goes. Sky, woods, and meadow, cloud-shadowed, song-enlivened, embosom him and touch his arduous toil with the dignity and beauty that attach to all manly intercourse with Nature. Not every plough-

man is a Burns, the passage of whose ploughshare bestows on the uprooted daisy the immortality of song in exchange for untimely end of warm earth and gentle blossoming; but the New England boys are few to whom the wilful beauty of the spring day or the ripe loveliness of autumn make no appeal as the furrows lengthen and multiply.

The truest companionship with Nature is that to which we are born rather than that into which we grow; and many of the most beautiful as well as the most profound comments on and interpretations of natural processes and phenomena have found expression in myths, folk-tales, and ballads,— those forms of literature which have the freshness and naïveté of youth in them. In the mind of every race the peculiar character of the scenery about its homes has sunk deep and become a part of its unconscious life. It is perhaps a matter of fancy that Nature has interwoven itself with domestic life more subtly and intimately in New England than elsewhere. When such a statement runs off the end of one's pen one immediately recalls what the Highlands have been to the Scotch, the Rhine to the Germans and the Alps to the Swiss; and the spell of these impressive and commanding scenes seems for the moment more swift and overpowering than that which New England scenery lays upon the mind. But when one remembers how many and how delicate are the invisible ties that time and growth have woven between childhood, youth, and maturity and the outer world in which each succeeding period has found its strength and joy, one is tempted to venture the statement that Nature lies a little nearer life in New England than elsewhere. The seasons do not form a procession there upon which one looks with a merely

THE COUNTRY ROAD IN WINTER.

AND woodland paths that wound between
Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighed.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

FROM "SNOW BOUND."

curious eye, entertained by the pomp and circumstance of the show of things, but not involved in the varied and sublime movement. On the New England farm the seasons are the four movements to which the outward activities and the inward impressions of life are set. They make the domestic calendar, with its successive works, pleasures, and experiences.

I.

WHEN the early spring comes, announced by the softening air, the solitary note, the adventurous arbutus, there is a swift and radical revolution of habit in the old house behind the elms. There is a softer blue in the sky, a delicacy of tone in the atmosphere, a pervading sense of liberation from the thraldom of past months, which stir the imagination and set the pulses beating. Yet it must be frankly conceded that the New England spring deserves much of the cynical disparagement to which it has been subjected. It is often long delayed, and it comes attended by all the winds of March; it is cold, damp, and full of guile. It continually makes promises which it fails to keep, and encourages hopes which it fails to justify; and it is this element of apparent duplicity which has excited a widespread prejudice. If the unpleasant quality of a New England spring were persistent and continuous, it would probably be borne with fortitude; but at intervals there is intercalated among these overcast and chilling days a day of tender and brooding loveliness, — a day radiant with all manner of sweet prophecies; a day which lures one into the belief that

ON THE EXETER RIVER.

I GLIDE under branches where rank above rank
  From the lake grow the trees, bending over its bosom;
Or lie in my boat on some flower-starred bank,
  And drink in delight from each bird-song and blossom.

Above me the robins are building their nest;
  The finches are here,—singing throats by the dozen;
The catbird, complaining, or mocking the rest;
  The wing-spotted blackbird, sweet bobolink's cousin.

JOHN TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE.

FROM "MENOTOMY LAKE."

summer is at hand. And, lo! the very next day the returning east wind, the penetrating chill, the sullen sky! It is this duplicity which excites not only disappointment but personal resentment, — resentment which delights in bitter epithets and cutting sarcasm and cynically humorous description.

As a matter of justice, however, it must be conceded that it is man's optimism rather than Nature's integrity which is at fault. The discouraging circumstances under which Nature labors in the endeavor to bring summer back to the leafless woods and the almost impassable roads ought to command our sympathy; and the occasional smile which sky and landscape wear in this prolonged and painful undertaking ought to be welcomed as the evidence of the kindly purpose behind the frowning face. Nature in New England is always downright and upright. There is no empty flattering, no demoralizing coddling, of man; there is a steady appeal to his manliness. The relation between them is on a moral and self-respecting basis; man gets nothing for which he does not give something. The New England spring exacts a good price for all that it bestows; but if one is willing to pay for his pleasures with his pains, there is no lack of ample returns. A road-bed which the clearing-up process of early spring has transformed into a series of sloughs does not offer large opportunity for rapid pedestrianism; but the exercise of agility in making one's way from one point of solidity to another is not without exhilaration. There is a freshness in the air which has the inspiration of prophecy in it; the snow still lies in patches on the uplands, and the little streams that steal down through the hills to the lowlands are fed by

these fast-disappearing reservoirs of winter; the grass is already green in places, the arbutus may be found for the seeking, and the bluebirds announce their recovery of their ancient rights of possession.

The sentiment of the season is a mingled freedom and hopefulness. Spring in the air means a warmer imagination and more active impulses. On the farm the preparations for the work of another season were long ago complete, and impatience takes the place of the tranquil mood of winter. The schoolboy whistles a livelier air on his way to the little building where severe labors of the mind have given the winter a sombre hue; and both air and execution are still more free and buoyant as he starts homeward, visiting on his way the scene of the "sugaring," and indulging probably in that delicious preparation known as "maple wax." However laggard and long delayed, Spring finally arrives, with an unmistakable air of having come to stay. But she has lingered so long over her preparations that she is no sooner fairly at home than Summer is at the doors, gently but with irresistible insistence asking her place.

PAST MILKING TIME.

THEY wait the opening of the gate;
How peaceful their repose!
It soothes the mind, and o'er the scene
A quiet beauty throws.

O'er the wide pastures they have roamed
Through all the summer day,
Grazing at will o'er hill and vale,
Where'er they chanced to stray.

JONES VERY.

FROM "THE COWS WAITING AT THE PASTURE GATE."

II.

THE loveliness of early summer in New England is as incommunicable as the fragrance of the apple-blossoms and of the roses which bloom in the van of the advancing procession of flowers. There is no tropical splendor about it, no prodigal and riotous waste of color and sweetness, but a softness and delicacy, a tenderness and bloom wholly captivating. The tender green of the elms along the roads, and the denser trees that mass themselves in the woods; the brightness and freshness of the meadows, pied with daisies and dandelions and buttercups; the delicate, almost spiritual blue of the sky; the balm of the air, into which countless flowers are breathing their souls; the radiant beauty of the roses, in which the heart of the season speaks; the whole company of singers, easing their throats of a joy which all the world shares but which they alone express, — the charm of these things, like the beauty of the face at DeQuincey's fireside, "does not lie within the empire of any earthly pencil." The naturalists tell us much about New England, but they fail to report its soul. They track the shy dweller in the woods; they set snares which the wariest bird cannot escape; they record the minutest

change in meadow and forest and stream, — but there lies a beauty on the face of the world which eludes them; the poets only are able to report it. And all that the poets can give us is a faint transcription.

After this early bloom there follows the ripeness of the later season. The ethereal and evanescent loveliness of youth, half prophecy and half fulfilment, gives place to the rounded fulness of maturity; the blossom becomes the fruit. The foliage passes from the tender to the darker green, and in dense masses shadows the dusty road and shelters the cattle in the sun-swept meadows. The farm-work is at a fever heat, and across the fields of grain the picturesque lines of reapers move in a kind of rhythmic order, — for there are still localities in New England where man has not entirely delegated his work to machinery. It will be a sad day when men cease to work in the fields. In New England that day is not likely to come. The New England farm does not offer the kind of surface on which the machine works with ease and certainty; the level fruitfulness of the vast stretches of prairie farms will never be known among these hills, nor will the monotony of unbroken horizon lines.

The difficulty of bringing Nature to terms in New England has had not a little to do with the picturesqueness of country life there; for in its best estate there was and is a picturesque element in that life. It is not the picturesqueness of the English country-side, with its noble trees, its verdant lanes, its quaint homes, its mellow and ripened beauty; nor is it the picturesqueness of the Continental landscape, with its charming Old-World villages, its well-kept fields undisfigured by fences, its beautiful and orderly husbandry. The pictur-

THE COUNTRY ROAD IN SUMMER.

A REGION of repose it seems,
A place of slumber and of dreams,
Remote among the wooded hills!
For there no noisy railway speeds,
Its torch-race scattering smoke and gleeds;
By noon and night, the panting teams
Stop under the great oaks, that throw
Tangles of light and shade below.

LONGFELLOW.

FROM "THE WAYSIDE INN."

esqueness of the New England farm springs neither from the mellowness of age nor from the husbandry of man touched with the beauty of exquisite carefulness. It is the picturesqueness of adaptation to the country and the necessities of life; of sincerity, and of a thrift which, although rarely neat, is sagacious and watchful. It springs, above all, from that atmosphere of long-continued and familiar intercourse between man and Nature which comes only after generations have lived, worked, and died in a locality, and have so wrought themselves into it that they have humanized it. An old New England farm-house rarely has any claim to architectural impressiveness; beauty as a thing to be definitely sought in its construction never entered into the minds of its builders. They planned it solely with reference to their wants; they placed it usually where it would be accessible and sheltered, and not where it would give emphasis to some elevation or command a noble outlook.

Once built and occupied, the surroundings were left to care for themselves. What has happened since has been simply the coming and going of the years, with their labors and their growth. The old house is as uncompromisingly severe in line and devoid of art as of old; but it has become a part of the landscape. The trees which shelter the road in front, or stand singly or in little groups about it, have attained full growth, and their repose and amplitude of shade lend quiet dignity to the place. Nature suffers nothing to remain vulgar or unclean; give her time, and she will reclaim the rudest work of man or cleanse his foulest impurity. There was never anything vulgar in the old New England farm-house, nor in the life which it sheltered. Simplicity and sincerity make vulgarity im-

possible. The very essence of the older New England life was its freedom from vulgarity; that is a thing of modern growth, a product of insincerity and pretension.

What Nature had to do for the New England farm-house was to soften it, by bringing it into harmony not only with the needs of those who lived in it but with its surroundings. This task has been no easy one, but it has been accomplished. There has been no compromise, — the old house preserves its integrity intact; but it is no longer detached and solitary, — it has become a part of the landscape. Trees of noble girth stand about it in friendliest companionship; the years have stained and weather-beaten its crude tones into harmony with the prevailing tones of the country; moss and vines cling to it so closely that they have become part of it; the grass is green about it; foot-paths have been worn to the well, the garden, the road; even the fences have settled into modest performance of duty, and have lost their old offensive self-assertion. The life that has gone on under the old roof these many generations has left its memorials without as well as within the walls; and as one pauses along the road and looks at the quiet old place he is conscious that love and labor, suffering and death, have touched the house with that human interest which Nature, with all her marvellous resources, is powerless to impart. The surroundings are rarely perfectly kept, — they often show careless disregard of that finer order which includes beauty; but they are old, familiar, simple, ripe, and they testify that the house is, above all, a home. And this is the source of the picturesqueness of the New England farm-house.

MILKING TIME.

. . . . The loitering line
Of solemn-minded, melancholy kine

ANONYMOUS.

FROM "THE KENNELTC"

That picturesqueness attaches to the whole life of the farm, — to the sowing, the ploughing, the reaping, the threshing, if the old-time flails are still swung by lusty arms. It is certainly true, as Mr. Burroughs has said, that farm-life is less picturesque than it was in the days before the modern inventive spirit invaded the fields. A man in any honest work with his hands is almost always an interesting figure. Millet has made this generation aware of the poetry of toil at the very moment when the sense of kinship with the toiler has become peculiarly keen and sensitive to the appeal for justice as well as for sympathy. It is on the farm in America that toil takes on this aspect of poetry, as it was in the fields in France that Millet found it. The natural, unaffected action and movement of the body in hard work is rhythmic, and conforms to the law of Nature, which impresses order and beauty on all its processes. The old painters, in an age less human, less deeply touched by a sense of the fellowship of all life, would have perceived more quickly and rendered more powerfully the impressive habit and custom of a statelier society; the modern painter, bred not only in a democratic age but under the influence of a great movement toward Nature among all the schools, detects the line of beauty where Nature drew it with a free hand, rather than where society has drawn it with academic precision. City life in this country is almost devoid of the element of picturesqueness; one must go to the country to find it. And there one finds it chiefly where work is hardest and most exacting. The lumberman and the charcoal-burner in the remotest sections have much more to tell the artist than the gentleman-farmer, prosperously housed on his well-ordered estate within reach of some city.

In any season one cannot pass a hill farm — to select a type of the most arduous and unprofitable farming — without seeing a succession of pictures. The ploughman slowly turning the stubborn soil; the sower with his free, vigorous movement; the reaper, in the rhythmic action of whose swing and stride one feels something elemental, something which Nature must feel as a manifestation of herself; the hay-maker in the scythe-swept field; the apple-gatherer in the orchard, sung of all poets and dear to all children; the thresher, swinging his flail on the floor of the great barn, between the open doors at either end; the wood-cutter, whose axe sounds the challenge of man in the very citadel of Nature, — is there one of these figures which does not surprise us continually with glimpses of that beauty with which Nature sweetens the toil she exacts? And then there is the coming home of the hay, — the great, top-heavy loads moving along the roads and through the narrow lanes with the solemnity and caution of a man-of-war steaming through a crowded harbor; and overhead the sky is blue, and all the birds are making free with the golden day as if they were part of the triumphal procession. Stacked in the fields or tossed from the loaded wagon into the mow, there is nothing more wholesome, sweet, and deeply inwrought into the associations of farm-life than man's dealings with the grass of the field, — beautiful since the days when the first herdsman led forth his cattle, and still the very base and corner-stone of the farmer's prosperity.

And who can hear the tinkle of the bell or the low which announce the coming and going of the cows, without instantly seeing a succession of charming pictures? There is,

EASTERN POINT BEACH, GLOUCESTER HARBOR.

AND I think of the fleet that sailed
From the lovely Gloucester shore,
I think of the fleet that sailed
And came back never more!

T. B. ALDRICH.

FROM "THE VOICE OF THE SEA."

indeed, a stern reality about the early milking, which conceals its poetry from those who are actively engaged in it; but the procession of the cows starting out for the day; the loitering along the way suggestive of a delightful absence of the sense of responsibility; the slow movement across the meadow; the meditative noon-day siesta in the shadow of the trees, or the enviable brooding knee-deep in the brook while the sun burns overhead; and last of all, the home-coming, when the earliest shadows of the evening are beginning to steal out of the woods, — these moving figures make up the frieze of daily life on the farm, if one may be permitted the figure.

III.

CITY-BRED folk think of the farm as something to be sought in summer, but to be avoided at all other seasons. The initiated, however, are aware that there are other and dearer associations than those that grow under the suns of July and August. Autumn appeals more deeply to the imagination than summer; it expresses less, for it is more quiescent and brooding, but it suggests more. The late September and October days are ripe with a beauty in which the memory of past loveliness, the vision of present splendor, and the prophecy of coming decay are subtly blended. In the fields the corn is stacked in orderly rows, with here and there a yellow disc of pumpkin shining through; the golden-rod lights the road with its yellow plumes, while the aster sedately blossoms as if aware of the dignity of its position at the very rear of the long procession of the flowers; in the woods the maples are yellow and crimson; and over the whole landscape lies a brooding loveliness such as no other season knows. Autumn, as Mr. Lowell told us long ago, is the poet of the year; and while he dreams under the trees, Nature lays her finger on our lips, and we wait hushed and silent lest the spell be broken. The days pass in a deep revery, and at night the moon,

A WARM CORNER.

THE cock's shrill trump that tells of scattered corn,
Passed breezily on by his flapping mates.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

FROM "AN INDIAN SUMMER REVERIE."

A.W.Elson & Co Boston (Gravure etch.)

nearer and larger than its wont, lights the fields without breaking their repose. On such a night — a slight frost in the air — one may so far combine the poetic mood with other and grosser things as to seek some cider-mill a mile or more distant; and there, by the aid of a straw, the earliest vintage of the year offers itself in that innocent state which gives no hint of the moral depravity that marks its mature condition.

The days, dreamful and brooding as they seem, are not slow of foot, and before one is aware there is a sharper breath in the air. The farm-work has been pushed forward against an early winter, and in the little schoolhouse the boys and girls are settling down to their tasks with wistful glances backward at the days when the doors and blinds of the temple of learning were closed. November, fitful and uncertain, is sacred to the great New England Festival of Thanksgiving, — a day memorable for what it recalls of the past and for what it contains of the present. The roof-tree of the home covered the earliest temple, and under it in New England the only formal recognition of the sublime beneficence of Nature to man is made. It is a venerable and beautiful custom which recalls scattered families, and unites them for a few brief hours where the memories of childhood and the dreams of youth are hoarded. But it has a deeper meaning than is to be found even in these half-mirthful and half-pathetic re-unions of the broken circle. It recognizes and symbolizes that lasting fellowship of man with Nature by which and in which men are fed, clothed, trained, and brought to that highest manhood which means courage, industry, integrity, independence, and character.

IV.

HEN the doors of the old house close behind the departing guest at the Thanksgiving feast, winter is at hand; and any morning one may wake to find the snow silently folding the familiar world out of sight. The days are short and dark, and on many a night

> "the housemates sit
> Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
> In a tumultuous privacy of storm."

The landscape is as stainless as the sky; the fences are hidden, or have exchanged their uncouthness for some sculptured fulness and roundness of outline; in the woods the roads are defined only by the trees, clad now in the whitest of ermine. The schoolboy's rosy cheeks and rapid gait bear witness to the frost in the air, which often "bites shrewdly" in the early morning. The pond at the foot of the hill is covered with skaters, whose ringing movements and merry shouts make the otherwise silent night vocal with life and gayety. There are sleighing parties, whose tinkling bells wake the echoes of the woods; and the music of the violin is still honored as the best possible inspiration of the dance. On the farm, in spite of the care of the cattle and the endless round of small duties to be performed, there is a considerable margin of leisure to be filled in with books, with newspapers, and with social life.

THROUGH THE PINES.

THE gods talk in the breath of the woods,
They talk in the shaken pine,

. . . . . .

And the poet who overhears
Some random word they say
Is the fated man of men
Whom the ages must obey.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

FROM "THE POET."

It was no accident of residence that Emerson's "Nature" was written in New England; it could hardly have been written elsewhere. It deals with the relationship of man with Nature in a profoundly poetic and spiritual mood, but also with the keenest and surest practical sense. One is made to feel that the uses of Nature in man's daily life have a beauty unsuspected before, — or if suspected, not fully realized. In this subtle and necessary companionship not only is the soul fed with visions of beauty, but eye and brain, hand and foot, every faculty of observation and meditation, are trained. Out of the work of man in the fields, the forests, the mines, the body is nourished, the soul fed, and character developed. With Emerson, "character" is always the master word; and it is this word which he writes across every page in the great book of Nature. Men cannot have any companionship with the ancient mother of the race, at whose bosom all the generations have been nourished, without unconsciously receiving that moral training and power which are the elements of character. And this is pre-eminently true of the relationship which exists between man and Nature in New England, where industry, vigilance, and the most intelligent husbandry are the conditions of success. The history of Nature could not be written there unless that of man were included; and the story of human life without the story of natural surroundings and influences would be so incomplete as to be incomprehensible. The domestic calendar includes the flight of the birds, the coming and going of the flowers, the garnishing and dismantlement of the woods, the fertility and barrenness of the fields; and whoever would keep the register of the seasons must also keep that of the hearthstone.

If Nature holds herself at a high price in New England, she makes no niggardly bargain; she gives herself with a splendid generosity. It would be difficult in any country of

equal area to discover a greater variety of lovely or impressive natural forms. To the quiet, homelike landscapes already described there must be added, in any complete vision of the country, noble mountain ranges, lakes of romantic or solitary loveliness, vast stretches of forest, and a coast-line as picturesque and varied as the Mt. Desert mountains, the Camden hills, the level beaches of Old Orchard, the rocks of Cape Ann, and the solitary dunes of Cape Cod. To follow the New England coast-line is to see almost all the forms which the land takes on where it joins the sea; to look down on a summer day from the summit of Green Mountain on the island of Mt. Desert is to possess oneself of a vision of ocean, islands, and coast-line as vast as the horizon which forms its boundaries, and as glorious as blue sky and radiant sea and verdure-clad mountain can make it; while of that sublime outlook, crowded with sunlit peaks, which awaits one on Mt. Washington, who can speak with commensurate majesty and beauty? There are those not indifferent to the grandeur of the White Mountain region, nor to the loveliness of the sea where it lies, soft and alluring, about Newport in the summer days, whose hearts find their real home among the Berkshire hills, where the vastness of mountain forms is touched and humanized by a quiet beauty, and boldness of outline is softened by a noble repose. Nature in New England has lovelier retreats, more solitary fastnesses, sublimer and more awful visions, but no beauty at once so impressive and so familiar, so full of appeal to the imagination, and so intimate in ministry to the life of the home, as that which dwells within the circle of the Berkshire hills. There is no other place where she welcomes us more graciously, none where we part from her so reluctantly.

85-B9771

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE
3 3125 01335 4226